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ABSTRACT

This report first outlines the status of early childhood care and education in Minnesota, including the effects of an inadequate child care system on families and society. Issues of quality, cost, and availability of care are then addressed and are the basis of the recommendations for a coordinated child care system. Recommendation 1 (Affordability) calls for, among other things, a sliding fee program and continued legislative commitment to child care. Recommendation 2 (Quality and Availability) proposes increased funding (an additional $7 million in 1992-93), a scholarship program, a tax credit, and child care subsidy formula. Recommendation 3 (Coordination) calls for a state level Early Childhood Care and Education Council to coordinate services, and for regional coordination to be carried out through existing resource and referral agencies. Appended is information on: current child care funding; early childhood care and education administrated by state agencies; definitions; sources; and task force members and participants. Contains approximately 55 references. (LB)

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Putting Children First:

Coordinating Early Childhood Care and Education

Report of the Child Care Task Force
Commission on the Economic Status of Women
February 1991

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Putting Children First:

Coordinating Early Childhood Care and Education

February 1991

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Report Summary

Minnesota is a recognized leader in child care services and programs that support and provide assistance to children and parents. The strengths of the current system include a wide variety of settings, hours and delivery of care, culturally diverse providers, parental involvement and an expectation that licensed programs meet basic health and safety standards. Because of economic and social changes, however, the needs of Minnesota's children are growing and changing faster than can be met by current services.

- 57 percent of all mothers of children under the age of six are in the work force.
- Mothers of young children are the fastest growing group of new entrants into the labor force.
- Over 75 percent of the state's children age 5 to 12 live in families in which both parents work outside the home.
- At the same time, relatives and alternative caregivers are also in the labor force.
- Increased mobility has meant that working families often live far from relatives who could be caregivers.

Seven different state agencies provide funding to families and oversee services related to early childhood care and education; 87 counties and 435 school districts and various other public entities administer these services.

Early childhood care and education represents the concept that children learn continuously, regardless of the setting. Statewide coordination is necessary because:

- Quality care is often costly and difficult for parents to find.
- Low salaries, poor working conditions and lack of benefits make it difficult for child care professionals to be caring workers and to enhance the healthy development of the children in their care.
- Caregiver turnover means constant disruption and instability for children.
- Greater costs to taxpayers will result if children's needs are not met in their earliest years.

As a state and as a nation, we face immediate and long-term costs in the quality of our work force, the education of our children and the stability of our families if children do not receive the care they need.

Critical Elements of an Early Childhood Care and Education System

Quality, cost and availability are three critical elements that determine whether an early childhood care and education system is meeting the needs of children, parents and society. These elements are the basis for the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Affordability

A. The task force recommends that the legislature fully fund the Basic Sliding Fee program so that Minnesota families can afford child care services. An additional $155 million per biennium is needed for this purpose. The legislature should continue increasing the Basic Sliding Fee program until this goal is met.

B. The task force recommends that the legislature continue its commitment to child care by:

1. Increasing the state's contribution to the Basic Sliding Fee program by $5 million in this biennium;

2. Ensuring that families receive continuous child care assistance until they are no longer financially eligible;

3. Ensuring that AFDC families not in the STRIDE program receive child care subsidies.

C. The task force recommends that the capacity of the Basic Sliding Fee program be extended by five percent increments in each biennium until it serves families making 100 percent of the state median income.

D. The task force recommends that the formula for allocating money to the counties for the Basic Sliding Fee program more accurately reflect each county's actual child care expenditures; that the Commissioner of Human Services be required to reallocate unexpended funds among the counties; and that counties be allowed to carry forward child care money from one fiscal year to the next.

E. The task force recommends that the Minnesota Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit be extended to families caring for an infant under 16 months at home.

F. The task force recommends that the legislature increase income taxes in a progressive way to pay for an improved early childhood care and education system.

Recommendation 2: Quality and Availability

A. The task force recommends that the legislature increase funding to improve the quality of early childhood care and education services.

B. The task force recommends that the legislature establish incentive grants to encourage child care centers and family child care providers to obtain accreditation and certification and to achieve improved pay for child care workers.

C. The task force recommends that the legislature meet the increasing need for early childhood professionals by establishing a provider training scholarship program for family child care providers and child care center staff.

D. The task force recommends that the legislature appropriate funds for improving licensing services in order to improve efficiency in processing licensing applications and in monitoring compliance.

E. The task force recommends that the legislature extend the Minnesota Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to family child care providers who also care for their own children.

F. The task force recommends that when the state adopts the federal reimbursement formula for child care subsidies, it ensures that providers do not lose income as a result of the change and that the state monitor the extent of the impact of the federal rate on parental choice of provider.

Recommendation 3: Coordination

A. The task force recommends that the legislature establish a state level independent body called the Early Childhood Care and Education Council to coordinate early childhood care and education services.

B. The task force recommends that coordination at the regional level be carried out through existing child care Resource and Referral Agencies.

The task force recommends that the legislature appropriate an additional $7 million for early childhood care and education services in the 1992-93 biennium. This appropriation should be spent in the ways outlined on the next page.

Child Care Task Force

All of the funding recommendations are based on the task force's analysis of how to spend new federal funding amounting to about $32 million in the 1992-93 biennium. If federal funding is spent differently, the recommendations for state funding indicated below would also change.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. COORDINATION

Create an independent state council, the Early Childhood Care and Education Council, to coordinate child care and related policy and to improve accessibility for families.

Early Childhood Care and Education Council — **$125,000**

2. AFFORDABILITY

The legislature should fully fund the Basic Sliding Fee program so that Minnesota families can afford child care services. An additional $155 million per biennium is needed. The legislature should continue increasing the Basic Sliding Fee program until this goal is met. The task force recommends that $5 million (in addition to the current $21.7 million) be appropriated for the 1992-93 biennium.

Basic Sliding Fee program — **$5 million**

3. QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY

Improve worker skills:
Create a provider training scholarship program for family child care providers and child care center staff.

Scholarship program — **$475,000**

Improve worker wages:
Create incentive grants to encourage child care centers and family child care providers to obtain accreditation and certification and to improve compensation for child care workers.

Incentive Grants — **$1.2 million**

Licensing:
Improve licensing services to shorten the application process for new providers and increase efficiency of monitoring.

Licensing — **$200,000**

TOTAL STATE FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS — **$7 million**

TAX RECOMMENDATIONS

Help for parents at home:
Expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to parents who are at home with their children during the first year and to family child care providers caring for their own children.

Expanded Tax Credit — **The cost in foregone revenues is unknown at this time.**

Introduction

The birthright of Minnesota children is a healthy start in life. More than ever, today's families are relying on child care outside of the home to help provide their children with this healthy start.

Minnesota is a recognized leader in child care services and programs that support and provide assistance to children and parents. The strengths of the current system include:

The needs of Minnesota's children and parents are growing and changing faster than can be met by existing child care services.

- A wide variety of settings, hours and delivery of care;
- Culturally diverse providers;
- Parental involvement; and
- An expectation that all licensed programs meet basic health and safety standards.

However, because of economic and social changes, the needs of Minnesota's children and parents are growing and changing faster than can be met by current child care services.

The state of Minnesota has provided funding based on maximizing the choices parents have in child care services, but has not been able to ensure that no family is denied access to quality child care because of a lack of funds. Between 1980 and 1990, the Minnesota Legislature increased the state's contribution to child care from $750,000 per year to more than $23 million per year.

Nevertheless, at the end of 1990 more than 4,000 families remain on child care subsidy waiting lists. These families may not be able to work or go to school because they cannot afford to pay for care for their children.

The inability of the child care marketplace to meet the demands created by societal and economic change has meant an inadequate supply and uneven quality of child care services. Families often cannot buy the quality of care necessary for the nurturing and healthy development of their children.

Affordability of quality care is a critical element in selecting child care services. Providers keep costs unrealistically low, primarily through low wages and lack of benefits. The major effect has been that compensation of child care workers has not kept pace with inflation over the past ten years. As a result, staff turnover rates threaten the quality and consistency of the care Minnesota's children receive.

A Child Care Crisis

The state and its families are facing a child care crisis:

- For parents, quality care is often costly and difficult to find.
- For child care professionals, low salaries, poor working conditions and lack of benefits make it difficult to be caring workers and to enhance the healthy development of the children in their care.
- For children, caregiver turnover means constant disruption and instability. Researchers agree that inadequate care leads to problems in learning readiness, language and social development.
- For public policy makers, eventual greater costs to taxpayers will result if children's needs are not met as they grow and develop.

In 1989, the Minnesota Legislature recognized the severity of the child care crisis and its ultimate cost to taxpayers and society as a whole. It charged the Commission on the Economic Status of Women to study and make recommendations for a coordinated child care system in Minnesota.

The commission established the Child Care Task Force to carry out this mandate. This report is the product of the task force's work.

Constant caregiver turnover means constant disruption and instability. Inadequate care for children can lead to problems in learning readiness, language, and social development.

Need for Statewide Coordination

Child care and early education are often considered to be two different concepts. The task force chose to use the phrase "early childhood care and education" to represent the concept that children learn continuously, regardless of the setting.

While statewide coordination of child care services is only one needed response to the crisis, it is critical for the following reasons:

- Funds intended to help children make a healthy start will be spent more effectively.
- Pressing needs will be identified and addressed more efficiently.
- Cross-agency collaboration will increase.
- Families will be better assisted in finding needed programs.
- Children will be helped to develop the skills and abilities they will need to succeed in school and in later life.

An early childhood care and education system should provide quality education and care from birth through adolescence.

Task Force Mission

This report and the recommendations in it represent a wide range of viewpoints and constituencies. The task force declared as its mission to propose a coordinated early childhood care and education system that:

- Recognizes all children's need for developmentally appropriate early childhood care and education that promotes their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development.
- Assists families in providing and obtaining quality education and care that are accessible and affordable and can continue from birth through early adolescence, as needed.

- Maximizes and coordinates community resources for early childhood development at the state and local levels.
- Provides a supportive policy and stable funding for quality early childhood care and education that is respectful of the unique needs and diversity of individual families of all income levels and social and economic backgrounds.

Criteria for an Early Childhood Care and Education System

The task force established the following criteria for a coordinated early childhood care and education system.

1. **Parental Choice:** The system must offer maximum flexibility to meet needs.
2. **Quality of Service:** The system must assure quality of services to children and families.
3. **Cost:** The system must provide quality as well as affordable services available to all families.
4. **Supply:** The system must promote an adequate supply of services.
5. **Parental Involvement:** The system must promote partnerships between parents and early childhood care and education services.
6. **Community-Based Services:** The system must foster and promote empowerment and the involvement of neighborhood and other community-based groups and organizations as decision-makers, resource providers and evaluators.
7. **Diversity:** The community-based system must be respectful of and be responsive to children and families from all cultural backgrounds.
8. **Parent Education and Training:** The system must promote and complement education and training that empowers parents to become self-supporting and effective.

An early childhood care and education system must offer flexibility, quality and affordability.

9. **Worker Wages and Conditions.** The system must promote adequate wages and benefits to attract and retain qualified workers.

10. **Coordination of Services:** The system must build on present services and avoid duplication, reduce fragmentation and foster greater cooperation and increased collaboration among the state, public and private agencies that deliver services.

Summary of Recommendations

Sound state policy requires that children are a top priority. No surer example of this commitment could be given than to establish an early childhood care and education system that puts children first. The recommendations of this task force are designed as the *first steps* toward this goal.

The Child Care Task Force recommends to the legislature that it:

Sound state policy requires that children are a top priority.

- **Fully fund early childhood care and education services to make them affordable.**
- **Increase resources to improve the quality and availability of early childhood care and education services.**
- **Build a network to coordinate early childhood care and education services.**
- **Appropriate sufficient funds to expand the state's commitment to early childhood care and education services.**

Each of these recommendations is discussed more fully in the report that follows (see Section II, "Building and Financing an Effective Early Childhood Care and Education System").

Early Childhood Care and Education in Minnesota

This section discusses Minnesota's current early childhood care and education system, the effects of an inadequate system on families and on society and the critical elements of a healthy system.

Current Early Childhood Care and Education System

Changes in the ways we work, live and interact have profoundly affected our families and how we care for our children.

Today, 57 percent of all mothers of children under age six are in the work force -- an increase of more than one-third in the past decade alone.

The once "traditional" family made up of a father who worked outside the home and a mother who cared for the dependent children now constitutes only 12 percent of all U.S. households, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (see box on following page). Today, 57 percent of all mothers of children under age six are in the work force -- an increase of more than one-third in the past decade alone.

These demographic and economic changes have dramatically altered who cares for children. In the past, relatives often cared for the children of working parents. Now many of these alternative caregivers are also in the labor force. In addition, increased mobility has meant that working families often live far from relatives who could be caregivers. Thus, many families have had to look outside to find care for their children.

Changed Families, Changed Society

- Today, 57 percent of all mothers of children under the age of six are in the work force, an increase of more than one-third in the past decade alone.
- In Minnesota, mothers of young children are also the fastest growing group of new entrants to the labor force. In 1990, it was estimated that over 75 percent of the state's children age 5 to 12 lived in families in which both parents worked outside the home. This figure is expected to rise to approximately 80 percent by 1995.
- At the same time, single-parent, female-headed families with young children are becoming a greater proportion of all families. In 1980, 9.4 percent of all Minnesota families with children under six years of age were headed by single women. This percentage also continues to rise.
- Single-parent families are likely to be poor. Many single mothers work at low-paying and/or part-time jobs. Even those who have full-time jobs may not have income above the poverty level, which for a family of three in 1990 was $10,560 or approximately $5.07 per hour, only slightly above minimum wage.
- Two-income families may also be poor, particularly if both parents work at minimum wage or part-time jobs or if one or both parents are in school.

The child care system in Minnesota reflects the speed and impact of these family and societal changes. It is essentially a reactive rather than a proactive response. The programs have tended to be conceived and implemented to respond to a crisis or sudden need, not as part of a conceptually integrated and coordinated system.

Care and education for children under 12 years old in Minnesota is delivered by multiple providers, both public and private:

- **Seven different state agencies provide funding to families and oversee services related to early childhood care and education in Minnesota** (see box on following page and Appendix B);
- **87 counties, 435 school districts and various other public entities administer these services in a variety of ways.**

Funding for child care subsidies for low-income and moderate-income families is barely adequate to meet the need.

In such a complicated system, families often have difficulty finding out about and gaining access to available services. In addition, eligibility standards vary or may conflict from program to program. This patchwork of services and programs is often confusing to parents.

Perhaps the major barrier families must overcome to obtain quality early childhood care and education, however, is cost. Funding for child care subsidies for low-income and moderate-income families is not adequate to meet the need.

Many families' child care needs are unmet by any of the available programs. Some are underserved because of a lack of funds. Some are unserved because programs do not meet their needs or because they lack information about available services.

State Agencies

The following state government agencies are responsible for providing funding to families and for overseeing services related to early childhood care and education in Minnesota. (See Appendix B for a complete listing).

Department of Education: (DOE)

DOE administers the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program and school-age child care programs.

Department of Human Services (DHS):

DHS has the primary responsibility for funding child care services through its administration of the Basic Sliding Fee Program, the AFDC Child Care Program, Service Development Grants, the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and the Migrant Child Care Program.

Department of Jobs and Training (DJT):

The DJT is responsible for Head Start and STRIDE case management.

Department of Public Safety (DPS):

The DPS administers the Children's Trust Fund for prevention and treatment of child abuse.

Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB):

HECB administers child care subsidies for post-secondary students who are not receiving AFDC.

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH):

MDH is responsible for most children's health-related programs and for some child care licensing regulation.

State Planning Agency (SPA):

The SPA administers "Way to Grow," a pilot program connecting families to local services.

Effects of an Inadequate System on Families and on Society

As a state and as a nation, we face immediate and long-term costs in the quality of our work force, the education of our children and the stability of our families if children do not receive the care they need.

According to the 1989 National Child Care Staffing Study done by the Child Care Employee Project, inadequate child care settings jeopardize children's readiness for school by failing to provide them with experiences that meet their needs and stimulate their learning in all developmental areas: physical, social, emotional and intellectual.

Recent research from the University of Minnesota underlines how important it is for children to develop healthy attachments within the first 18 months of their lives.[1]

The attempts parents make to achieve a balance between the demands of their families and their work are made even harder when they cannot choose, afford or find care, or when they are dissatisfied with the care they have found.

Attachment is the process by which infants develop relationships with their parents and primary caregivers that will affect the rest of their lives. Infants who develop secure attachments grow up to trust the people close to them and exhibit a sense of competence that enables them to become productive, contributing members of society. Infants who develop anxious, insecure attachments often lack trust in people, and later may feel incompetent and may not succeed in school or at work.

Parents and caregivers who are sensitive and responsive to their infant's signals and attempts at communication will facilitate the development of secure attachments. Children are at high risk of developing negative attachments when they are placed in early childhood care and education settings with high staff turnover and highly stressed caregivers.

The attempts parents make to achieve a balance between the demands of their families and their work are made even harder when they cannot choose, afford or find care, or when they are dissatisfied with the care they have found. Parents who are unable to obtain adequate child care may have higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness and lower productivity on the job.

1 Erickson, M.F. and B. Egeland. "A Developmental View of the Psychological Consequences of Maltreatment." School Psychology Review 16(2) 1987, pp. 156-158.

The problems parents and children face become problems for employers as well. Affordable, quality early childhood care and education is a necessity for working parents, for children and for employers.

High-quality early childhood care and education helps to guarantee that the current work force will be more stable and productive and that the future work force will be skilled and able to meet the business demands of the future. An educated, stable and productive work force is in the interest of all the citizens of our state.

High quality early childhood care and education services help disadvantaged children gain the basic skills they need for success in school and the workplace.

Critical Elements of an Early Childhood Care and Education System

Quality, cost and availability are three critical elements that determine whether any early childhood care and education system is meeting the needs of children, parents and society.

Quality of Care

Everyone in Minnesota has a stake in the quality of care our children receive. Quality care is essential for the healthy development of Minnesota children--and for the health of Minnesota communities.

Children need safe, healthy, culturally sensitive, nurturing environments to help prepare them for the future. Parents need to know that their children are in good hands. In addition, high quality early childhood care and education services can help disadvantaged children gain the basic skills they will need for success in school and the workplace.

The task force recognized the research that identified the most critical indicators that directly relate to positive outcomes for children.[2] These indicators include those listed on the following page.

2 Weikart, David P. Quality Preschool Programs: A Long-Term Social Investment. New York: Ford Foundation, June 1989.

- **A stable relationship between child and caregiver:** Children do best when there is low staff turnover and programs are designed so children can maintain long-term relationships with one caregiver or a small group of them.
- **A limited group size:** Small groups of children work best in early childhood care and education.
- **A low staff-to-child ratio:** A low staff-to-child ratio, with few children per caregiver, is particularly important in providing good care.
- **Specialized caregiver training:** In both family child care homes and child care centers, specialized training of caregivers can improve the quality of care.
- **Adequate space:** Children do better in spaces with ample, well-differentiated areas for multipurpose play and discovery that allow for individual, small-group and large-group activities.

A low staff-to-child ratio, with few children per caregiver, is particularly important in providing good care.

Both parents and providers want these indicators of quality in early childhood care and education services. The dilemma for professionals is how to provide quality care at an affordable cost and increase the availability of care.

Staffing plays a major role in determining quality care and presents the biggest hurdle to this goal. The stability and training of staff are important factors for producing quality early childhood care and education.

Constant turnover of staff means that children receive poor care, adversely affecting their social, emotional and cognitive development. Child care centers and family child care providers have one of the highest employee turnover rates of any industry, in large part because of the exceptionally low salaries.

The turnover rate for child care center workers jumped from 15 percent in 1977 to 41 percent in 1989, according to the National Child Care Staffing Study. The family child care turnover rate ranges from 33 to 55 percent annually.

In Minnesota, 80 percent of child care workers do not receive paid health insurance, 55 percent have no paid sick leave and 63 percent receive no paid vacation, according to a 1990 survey of child care providers.[3] Child care teachers who have bachelor's degrees earn an average of $13,500 for a 12-month year in the midwest, compared to beginning public school teachers, who earn an average of $18,500 for a nine-month year.

Cost of Care

In addition to quality of care, cost is a crucial element in making care available to all families needing it. In Minnesota, the costs of child care vary considerably, depending on the community, type of care, location and availability.

These costs can be extremely hard to calculate precisely. Annually, these expenditures can amount to $2,860 to $5,720 per child.

- In Minnesota in 1990, the average cost per week of child care for a preschool child in a child care center was $80.
- Toddler care was $90 per week and infant care was $110 per week.
- Before-school and after-school care for school-age children in centers averaged $63 per week.
- Family child care was about $70 per week for children from infancy to five years of age and about $55 per week for school-age children.

Despite this financial burden on parents, child care fees are an incomplete measure of the actual costs of care. Fees charged by most providers do not reflect what it actually costs to provide basic care. In many cases, child care workers through their low wages are actually subsidizing the true costs of the care.

Fees charged by most providers do not reflect what it actually costs to provide basic care. In many cases, child care workers through their low wages are actually subsidizing the true costs of the care.

3 1990 Minnesota survey conducted by member agencies of the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

Earnings of Child Care Center Staff and Family Child Care Providers

The following earnings estimates are based on a Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network 1990 survey.

	Hourly Range	Annual Range
Child care teachers	$6.03 to 7.04	$12,542 to 15,392
Assistant teachers	$4.94 to 5.55	$10,275 to 11,544
Child care assistants	$4.33 to 4.75	$9,006 to 9,880
Family child care providers	$4.00	$8,320

In addition, few child care providers receive such benefits as paid health insurance, sick leave or vacation.

The money spent nationally on educating children under six is less than one percent of all the dollars that go to educating children six years and up.

As these figures show, a majority of providers in family and center child care programs are earning just above the minimum wage. Lead teachers in early childhood care and education programs make about half the salaries of comparably trained professionals in the public schools. Child care salaries have not kept pace with increases in other fields, amounting to about eight percent in the last 10 years.

The problem is that few parents could afford to pay for child care if the fees were based on the actual costs of care. Subsidies from government do not result in higher wages for providers. In addition, indirect subsidies from employers and nonprofit organizations (such as donated space or equipment) also do not result in higher wages.

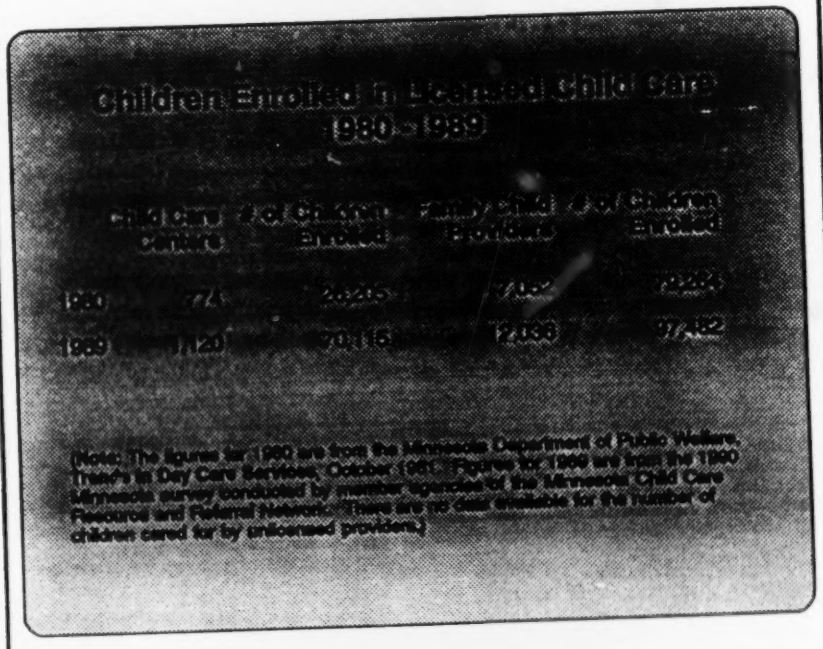
Although a child's development in his or her first six years lays the foundation for future learning and growth, the money spent nationally on educating children under six is less than one percent of all the dollars that go to educating children ages six years and up.

Every dollar invested in quality early childhood care and education saves an estimated $4.75 in later costs for public assistance, special and remedial education and criminal justice.[4] This initial investment increases the likelihood that children receiving quality early childhood care and education will finish high school, gain meaningful and productive employment and become contributors to society.

Availability of Care

The cost and quality of child care services are not the only problems faced by Minnesota's families. Child care programs, centers or family providers, may not be available to many families, even if they can afford the care they desire.

A shortage exists even though all types of child care services have expanded dramatically in recent years, as shown by the chart below, which includes licensed providers only.



(Note: The figures for 1980 are from the Minnesota Department of Public Welfare, Trends in Day Care Services, October 1981. Figures for 1989 are from the 1990 Minnesota survey conducted by member agencies of the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network. There are no data available for the number of children cared for by unlicensed providers.)

Every dollar invested in quality early childhood care and education saves an estimated $4.75 in later costs for public assistance, special and remedial education and criminal justice.

4 A Bi-partisan staff report of the (U.S). House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families. Opportunities for Success: Cost-Effective Programs for Children. 1985.

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Other measures of the increased demand for early childhood care and education include:

- Before-school and after-school care was provided through 135 public school districts and more than 80 non-public programs to 17,000 children in 1989.
- Minnesota's 34 Head Start programs served close to 8,000 children in 1990.
- About 178,000 children and parents participated in the Early Childhood Family Education program of 360 public school districts during the 1989-90 school year.

Even with all these providers and programs, only 54 licensed child care spaces exist for every 100 children under six years of age whose parents work or go to school. The need for child care is likely to increase every year, according to the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network survey noted above.

Only 54 licensed child care spaces exist for every 100 children under six years of age whose parents work or go to school.

In addition, early childhood care and education programs may not be available in a specific geographic area. Generally, child care tends to be in short supply in certain rural areas and poor urban neighborhoods, but more abundant in urban and affluent neighborhoods.

Care for infants and children with special needs is scarce and may be completely absent in many communities, particularly low-income neighborhoods. Parts of the state also experience shortages in care for school-age children.

If Minnesota is to meet the needs of its families, it must find a way to expand and maintain a quality early childhood care and education system while containing the costs to families.

Building and Financing an Effective System

Minnesota has a long-standing commitment to providing for the education of its children. The state currently finances the costs of public education for children from five years of age through high school and subsidizes the costs of much post-secondary education. In addition, it provides some limited financing for early childhood care and education (for example, Early Childhood Family Education and Head Start).

Minnesota needs to expand its commitment to early childhood care and education so that it truly provides educational opportunities for all persons from birth through higher education.

Minnesota needs to expand its commitment to early childhood care and education for its children so that it truly provides educational opportunities for everyone. Quality early childhood care and education is both a social and a financial responsibility. Some of the cost appropriately belongs to government because all people benefit.

The task force recognizes that the costs of quality early childhood care and education cannot fall only on government. A quality system requires the cooperation of government and the private sector. Businesses can and should expand and support early childhood care and education options within their own industries, workplaces and communities, as well as those provided by government.

A growing awareness on the part of Minnesota's businesses of the need for adequate child care is evidenced by a 1990 survey of 1,014 employers in the Twin Cities metropolitan area conducted by Child Care WORKS, a statewide advocacy organization. An overwhelming majority of employers responding to the survey believe that helping their employees meet their child care needs has a positive effect on the "bottom line".

The federal government currently funds child care in two basic ways: tax credits and direct subsidies to AFDC caretakers participating in the Minnesota welfare reform program, STRIDE. As the result of the passage of two major federal child care bills in late 1990, Minnesota is slated to receive about $16 million in new federal funds during 1991.

Education Costs in Minnesota*

In one year, it costs roughly $4,000 to send one Minnesota citizen to:

- **Full-time child care**
- **Public K - 12 education**
- **Higher education**

All taxpayers pay state, local, and federal taxes that support these programs.

Because of this support, parents pay:

- **0 percent of K-12 costs**
- **24 percent of higher education costs**

But they pay:

- **95 percent of child care costs**

* Adapted from a report by the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota.

Federal subsidies to non-AFDC participants will begin sometime in 1991. (See Appendix A for more information about federal funding.) These credits and subsidies, however, are not enough.

Although the solution to all child care problems does not lie solely with the state, the state can muster both the will and the resources necessary to give direction to developing a solution. Therefore, the task force makes the following recommendations to improve the affordability, quality, availability and coordination of early childhood care and education in Minnesota.

Recommendation 1: Affordability

A family using the Basic Sliding Fee program pays a portion of its child care expenses based on its size and income. The state and sometimes the county pays the rest.

The task force identified seven ways the state of Minnesota can increase the affordability of early childhood care and education.

A. **The task force recommends that the legislature fully fund the Basic Sliding Fee program so that Minnesota families can afford child care services. An additional $155 million per biennium is needed for this purpose. The legislature should continue increasing the Basic Sliding Fee program until this goal is met.**

What $155 Million Per Biennium Will Do

Since 1980, the Basic Sliding Fee program has been the primary mechanism for subsidizing child care costs of low-income Minnesota families. A family using the program pays a portion of its child care expenses based on its size and income. The state and sometimes the county pays the rest.

This means a family's payment rises only when family income increases. For example, a family earning 42 percent of the median income pays about three percent of its income for child care fees, while a family making 75 percent of the median income pays 17 percent of its income.

At the present time, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is authorized to serve families earning up to 90 percent of the state's median income who are not receiving AFDC. Because funds for child care have always been in short supply, however, the program does not serve those families with income above the 75th percentile. In fact, most families served by the program earn less than 60 percent of the state median income.

The Basic Sliding Fee program is funded by a direct appropriation from the legislature to DHS and is administered by the counties. Some counties supplement this appropriation with county funds.

Families are not guaranteed to receive child care through this program and are not accepted into this program when a county runs out of money. Families on AFDC are not eligible for these funds. At the time of this writing, over 4,000 Minnesota families are on waiting lists for the Basic Sliding Fee program, some of whom can expect to wait for up to three years before receiving services. The wait is longest in the metropolitan area.

DHS estimates that about 4,995 families will be served by the Basic Sliding Fee program in fiscal year 1991. This number represents an estimated 20 percent of all those families eligible for and in need of child care subsidies, according to counties reporting the proportion of eligible families they served. Based on this analysis, there are about 25,000 families eligible for the program.

- The average cost of serving a family on the Basic Sliding Fee program is $3,150 per year.
- This cost is expected to rise to $3,528 during the coming biennium.
- It would cost more than $88 million per year or more than $176 million in a biennium to serve all families eligible for subsidies.

The state currently appropriates just over $21.7 million (1990 - 91 biennium) to the Basic Sliding Fee program. The additional $155 million recommended by the task force is needed to fully fund the program to serve all eligible families and allow for a much-needed increase in provider rates.

At the time of this writing, over 4,000 Minnesota families are on waiting lists for the basic sliding fee program. Some can expect to wait for up to three years before receiving services.

What $155 Million Per Biennium Will NOT Do

Even a fully funded Basic Sliding Fee program will not help AFDC families leave public assistance. At the present time, families on AFDC who want child care in order to go to school or work must be accepted into the STRIDE welfare reform program.

There is no child care money available for families receiving AFDC who are not in STRIDE.[5]

The STRIDE program is currently open only to AFDC families where the caregiver:

(1) is under age 22 and without a high school education or graduate equivalency degree; or

(2) has been on AFDC for four years or more; or

(3) has no children under age 16.

Those who leave AFDC because of increased earnings are eligible for one year of guaranteed subsidies.

The task force members believe that investing in child care for families wanting to leave AFDC makes more sense than continuing AFDC payments for years into the future.

The task force members believe that investing in child care for families wanting to leave AFDC makes more sense than continuing AFDC payments for years into the future. All of the additional money needed to fully fund the Basic Sliding Fee program need not come from the state. Counties will continue to pay their part of Basic Sliding Fee costs, and a good share of Minnesota's new federal child care money will likely be used for the Basic Sliding Fee program.

As of this writing, it is impossible to know how the federal money will be allocated exactly or how this potential infusion of new money will affect current waiting lists.

5 In 1990, the Legislature created a special program to serve these families (see Minnesota Chapter 256H.736 Subdivision 3A, paragraph C), but appropriated no money to the fund.

B. The task force recommends that the legislature use the following principles in making decisions about child care funding for the current biennium:

1. The legislature should continue its commitment to child care subsidies by increasing the state's contribution to the Basic Sliding Fee program for low- and moderate-income families by $5 million.

   The amount of this increase for the 1992-93 biennium depends on how the state decides to spend the new federal money.

2. The legislature should ensure that families receive continuous child care. After they receive one year of subsidy which is guaranteed, families who leave AFDC expect to be eligible for the Basic Sliding Fee program if they continue to need a subsidy.

   If the legislature wants to assist families to become independent and leave AFDC, it must make a commitment to preserve child care funding for them until that funding is no longer needed. Waiting lists are so long in many counties, however, that families are losing child care assistance and are at risk of returning to AFDC. This is the most devastating impact of erratic child care funding policies on struggling families.

3. The legislature should ensure that there are child care subsidies for AFDC families not in STRIDE. Many families on AFDC want to go to school or training but cannot because they do not have child care. The state should make a child care commitment to families with the ability and the initiative to put together their own education or training programs.

If the legislature wants to assist families to become independent and leave AFDC, it must make a commitment to preserve child care funding for them until that funding is no longer needed.

C. The task force recommends that eligibility for the Basic Sliding Fee program be extended to families making more than 75 percent of the state median income.

Program eligibility should be extended by increments of five percent each biennium beginning in fiscal year 1993 so that child care expenses continue to represent a reasonable share of a family's income.

The basic idea of a sliding fee program is twofold: to make quality child care affordable to low- and moderate-income families and to help families make a gradual transition to paying their own costs of care as their incomes increase.

For example, under the current formula, the maximum monthly payment for a family of two (one adult, one child) is $300. In some areas of the state, this covers the cost of care, while in others it only comes close.

The basic idea of a sliding fee program is twofold: to make quality child care affordable to low- and moderate-income families and to help families make a gradual transition to paying their own costs of care as their incomes increase.

Many families who leave the Basic Sliding Fee program when their family income exceeds the eligibility standard are still unable to pay the full cost of care. This is particularly true when the family has more than one child or the family lives in the metropolitan area where rates tend to be higher. This situation will become more critical as time goes on and rates rise.

At the same time, it is important that providers be encouraged to raise their rates in order to increase the compensation and benefits for those who teach and care for children.

D. The task force recommends:

- **That the formula for allocating money to the counties for the Basic Sliding Fee program be changed to more accurately reflect the counties' actual child care expenditures;**
- **That the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services be required to reallocate unexpended child care funds among counties; and**
- **That counties be allowed to carry forward child care money from one fiscal year to the next.**

Under current law, the Department of Human Services (DHS) allocates the Basic Sliding Fee appropriation among Minnesota counties under a formula set by the legislature. The formula takes into account the number of families below the poverty level in each county as well as the county's portion of the AFDC caseload for the preceding year. The formula is then adjusted so that neither the seven-county metropolitan area nor the rest of the state receives more than 55 percent of the total.

Unfortunately, this formula leaves many counties with long waiting lists and others with unspent money at the end of each year. While the DHS Commissioner may reallocate unexpended or unencumbered money at the end of each quarter, there are two problems with this process:

(1) it is administratively cumbersome for the commissioner to reallocate money that would have been spent if allocated more appropriately in the first place; and

(2) the commissioner is not required to reallocate.

The task force is concerned that at a time when many Minnesota families are waiting for child care subsidies, all money appropriated for child care actually be used for its intended purpose. Revising the allocation formula and requiring the commissioner to reallocate unused money would accomplish this goal.

Flexible accounting is also important for the full use of child care money. This includes allowing DHS and counties to carry forward child care money from one year to the next. When a county agrees to provide a child care subsidy to a family, it incurs an obligation to continue the subsidy until the family is no longer eligible.

Counties are understandably hesitant to make this commitment when they are not sure how much money they will have available. Consequently, fewer families are served than the funding level would permit. One way to encourage counties to commit as much money as possible is to allow money to be carried forward across funding years.

When a county agrees to provide a child care subsidy to a family, it incurs an obligation to continue the subsidy until the family is no longer eligible. Counties are understandably hesitant to make this commitment when they are not sure how much money they will have available.

E. The task force recommends that the Minnesota Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit be extended to families that have an infant under 16 months of age and are not now eligible for this credit because they are not purchasing child care services.

A comprehensive system for the care of Minnesota's children must support parents who stay at home to care for their own children. Particularly important during infancy, parental care provides continuity and one-to-one interactions that are vital for a child's healthy growth and development.

The state Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit now provides an income tax credit to parents with annual incomes up to $27,000 who pay someone else to care for their children while they work outside the home. (See Appendix A for more information on tax credits.)

An early childhood care and education system must support parents who stay at home to care for their own children. Parental care provides continuity and one-to-one interactions that are vital for a child's healthy growth and development.

Families who choose to stay home to care for their infant children would be eligible for the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit under this proposal. For those who are eligible, the credit would range from $18 for families with one child and an income between $26,000 and $27,000 to $1,440 for families with two or more children and an income under $13,350.

Minnesota and its families may gain three benefits from this extension of the tax credit:

1. More parents would be able to choose to be at home to care for their infants during the critical first 16 months of life.

2. Low-income families not on the Basic Sliding Fee program in particular would benefit from this modest support.

3. The need for more quality licensed infant care in the state would be reduced by encouraging parents to care for their own infants. Quality infant care is expensive to provide and difficult to find. The number applying for Basic Sliding Fee subsidy also may be reduced to some degree by this credit.

Paid parental leave would be a more comprehensive approach to this problem.

F. The task force recommends that the legislature increase income taxes in a progressive form as necessary to pay for an improved early childhood care and education system.

The task force recognizes that implementation of its recommendations will require a major financial commitment from the people of Minnesota at a time when the state budget is experiencing a shortfall and needs are rising. Fully funding of early childhood care and education will require major reallocation of existing revenue and/or new taxes.

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The task force considered a number of potential sources of additional revenue for early childhood care and education, including the lottery, an income tax surcharge or check-off, increased sales taxes, a property tax levy, a payroll tax and the income tax.

Most of these sources either do not raise enough money (for example, the non-game wildlife check-off generates only slightly more than $1 million per year), will fall more heavily on low-income families (such as the sales tax) or are politically difficult to pass through the legislature (such as a property tax levy).

The main advantages of funding early childhood care and education by increasing income taxes are:

(1) the burden of paying will fall most heavily on those most able to pay;

(2) a relatively modest tax increase can generate substantial funds because almost every Minnesotan pays income taxes;

(3) income taxes, unlike property taxes, are generated and spent statewide; and

(4) there is more support among Minnesotans for increasing income taxes than for increasing other taxes.[6]

6 Children's Defense Fund survey of Minnesota voters, July 1990.

G. The task force recommends that the legislature capitalize on the willingness and desire of Minnesota voters to invest in the next generation.

The task force discussed whether or not a tax should be dedicated to increase early childhood care and education services. While members of the task force recognize that the legislature is not inclined to dedicate revenue, dedication may help promote an increased tax to the public at large.

The Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota found in a recent survey that Minnesota voters are willing to pay increased taxes for children's services if the increase is dedicated to children.

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Recommendation 2: Quality and Availability

The task force identified six ways Minnesota can increase the quality of the early childhood care and education offered in this state.

A. The task force recommends that the legislature increase funding available to improve the quality of early childhood care and education services.

In a previous section, this report discussed the indicators of quality child care: a stable relationship between child and caregiver, group size, staff/child ratios, caregiver training and space.

While state licensing standards ensure that family, group family and center child care meet at least minimum standards of group size, staff/child ratios and space[7], there are no such assurances for the relationships between child and caregiver or caregiver training. In addition, it is important to take steps to increase the supply of child care. The specific recommendations in this section of the report address these concerns.

7 Who Knows How Safe?: The Status of State Efforts to Ensure Quality Child Care, published by the Children's Defense Fund, 1990.

The Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are a major part of Minnesota's strategy to improve the quality of early childhood care and education. These non-profit agencies, funded in part by the state, improve the quality of care by:

- Educating parents to understand the importance of quality, and to know how to evaluate the quality of family child care providers, child care centers, Head Start or other programs.
- Maintaining a computerized data bank of licensed child care homes, centers and other programs and helping parents locate services with vacancies that meet their needs and the needs of their children. In 1989-90, Minnesota's network of resource and referral agencies helped 27,000 parents locate care.
- Helping parents work through differences with their caregiver about how to care for their children.
- Coordinating or providing training or educational services for early childhood care and education providers to increase the quality of the care they deliver.
- Providing technical assistance to new or potential new family and center child care providers.
- Identifying unmet early childhood care and education needs in the community based on information from parents and providers.

Twenty-one Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are currently operating throughout the state, but not all of them are yet able to meet local needs. While many are well-established and have built up trust with families and the community, others are just starting.

Twenty-one Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are currently operating throughout the state, but not all of them are yet able to meet local needs.

B. The task force recommends that the legislature establish incentive grants to encourage child care centers and family child care providers to obtain accreditation and certification and to achieve improved pay for child care workers. Additional funds should raised in the private sector.

As indicated earlier in this report, frequent staff turnover has a devastating effect on the development of a quality early childhood care and education system. In Minnesota, only about 40 percent of child care workers see themselves staying in the field more than five years and 35 percent think they will leave within the next two years.

In Minnesota, only about 40 percent of child care workers see themselves staying in the field more than five years and 35 percent think they will leave within the next two years.

Fewer than 20 percent of child care workers in for-profit centers, the fastest growing segment of the child care field, stay more than six years.[8]

The most frequent reasons child care workers cited for leaving their latest job include inadequate or low wages (32 percent), frustration (23 percent), lack of administrative support (23 percent) and inadequate benefits (18 percent). It is clear that improving child care wages and benefits will reduce staff turnover.

The dilemma for Minnesota is twofold: 1) how can public funding affect staff compensation in a market-based system? 2) how can the state ensure that increased costs for staff, which would be reflected in higher rates, do not make child care unaffordable for low- and moderate-income families?

Incentive grants would help improve salaries and increase the number of programs meeting the standards for accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children or certification by the National Family Day Care Association. Encouraging accreditation and certification of programs would improve quality through staffing and program changes.

The highest priority for these grants would be for providers who propose becoming accredited or certified or who propose raising compensation for child care workers. Grants would be for two years and large enough to make a significant impact on staff compensation. Grantees would be required to demonstrate how they could continue to maintain improved staff compensation after grant funding runs out.

8 "Turnover Hurts More than Child Care Workers," Child Care Workers' Alliance, 1989.

C. The task force recommends that the legislature meet the increasing need for early childhood professionals by instituting a provider training scholarship program for family child care providers and child care center staff.

A scholarship program would help caregivers pay for training leading to child development associate certificates, technical college diplomas and baccalaureate degrees. Unless incentives are provided both for people currently in direct care and for students entering the field, programs will not be able to find qualified staff, further eroding the quality of care and education for children.

Cultural sensitivity training should also be included as part of a scholarship program. This training should reflect the diverse child-rearing practices of the various cultures reflected in Minnesota communities.

Unless incentives are provided both for people currently in direct care and for students entering the field, programs will not be able to find qualified staff, further eroding the quality of care and education for children.

D. The task force recommends that the legislature increase funding for licensing services.

In some Minnesota counties, applicants for child care licenses must wait up to several months to be processed due to a lack of licensing staff at the county level. Additional licensing services are needed to monitor and enforce licensing standards. Licensing visits for accredited and certified child care centers and family child care providers should be streamlined and made less frequently. Concurrently, better-trained licensors are needed to intervene in poor quality and unlicensed child care situations.

It must be recognized that these recommendations only begin to address the need for better-trained providers and improved quality of care for children.

E. The task force recommends that the legislature extend the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to family child care providers who also care for their own children. This is another way to help child care providers improve quality.

Family child care providers are one of the most important resources of quality child care in Minnesota, as well as being among the small independent businesses that contribute so much to the state's economic well-being.

They are currently ineligible, however, for the state's Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, even though they are working while providing care for their own children. (See Appendix A for more information on tax credits.)

State licensing standards appropriately limit the number of children in family child care. A provider's own children are counted toward this licensed capacity. For example, if a provider is licensed to care for six children and has two preschool children of his or her own, the provider can only care for four other children, limiting the income received from running this business.

Extending the tax credit to this group of child care workers could also help make this vital profession more attractive to potential providers.

If a provider is licensed to care for six children and has two preschool children of his or her own, the provider can only care for four other children, limiting the income received from running this business.

- Family child care providers in families earning less than $27,000 would be eligible for the tax credit.
- The credit would range from $18 for a family with one child and an income under $27,000 to $1,440 for a family with two or more children and an income under $13,500.
- The maximum child care payment on which credit can be claimed is $2,400, far less than the median cost of full-time child care in Minnesota.
- The credit for family child care providers would be based on the value of the paid care they are providing to other children.

F. The task force recommends that when the state adopts the federal reimbursement rate for child care subsidies, it assures that providers do not lose income as a result of the change. The state should continue monitoring the extent of the impact of the federal rate on parental choice.

For children eligible for the Basic Sliding Fee program, the state reimburses child care providers based on what other providers in their area are charging. The reimbursement rate now is 110 percent to 125 percent of the median rates in the area. This sets a limit on state reimbursements and gives parents a choice by making all programs affordable to them.

However, the federal government, which contributes to subsidies, will only reimburse rates at or below 75 percent of the rate of all providers in an area (the 75th percentile). In July of 1991, Minnesota will move to this reimbursement rate. This change will cause some child care programs to temporarily lose part of their current rate of reimbursement, particularly if they are serving a high number of low-income children. While the system adjusts to this change, these programs should be protected.

The new rate system may have an adverse effect on the wages of family child care providers and child care center staff. It may also reduce the choices low-income families have for child care services. The effects of this change on parental choice should be monitored.

Recommendation 3: Coordination

The task force identified two ways to improve the coordination of early childhood care and education in Minnesota.

A. The task force recommends that the legislature establish a state level independent body called the Minnesota Early Childhood Care and Education Council.

Minnesota needs to build a network that would integrate and coordinate early childhood care and education policies, funding and services at the state, regional and community levels. The primary goal of such a system would be to deliver more and better services, both public and private, to children and families at a cost they can afford.

Minnesota needs to build a network that would integrate and coordinate early childhood care and education policies, funding and services at the state, regional and community levels.

A state level independent body called the Minnesota Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Council should be created to oversee the system by working with state agencies, recommending policy to the legislature, coordinating funding and receiving and distributing some operational and grant monies.

Through its articulation of system needs and awareness of issues and trends, this council would be the leader in the development of early childhood care and education programming throughout the state. Through its members, the council would have strong links to state agency staff who work directly with early childhood care and education programs and to the private sector.

The Minnesota ECCE Council would have the authority to:

1. Develop a biennial plan for early childhood care and education in the state.
2. Take a leadership role in developing the state budget recommendations for early childhood care and education made by the ECCE or other state agencies.
3. Apply for and receive state and federal monies and public and private grant monies.
4. Administer the Service Development Grants and the Child Care Resource and Referral grants currently administered by the Department of Human Services.
5. Participate in and facilitate the development of interagency agreements.
6. Coordinate state agency policies so that they do not conflict on early childhood care and education issues.
7. Advocate for an effective early childhood care and education system with state agencies and programs.
8. Study the need for child care funding for special needs children and special populations whose needs are not being met by current programs.
9. Assure that the early childhood care and education system is inclusive (multi-cultural, gender-fair and disability sensitive).
10. Be responsible for advocating policies and funding for early childhood care and education.

The long-term goal of this council would be to maximize funds and the work of the state agencies currently involved in early childhood care and education services.

B. The task force recommends that coordination at the regional level be carried out through the existing Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

Coordination efforts at the regional level would be through existing Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

As a new responsibility, the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies would be required to help create and coordinate early childhood care and education services at the community level by establishing community-based committees. The Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies will need additional funds to create and maintain these committees.

These Community-Based Committees would be voluntary committees (new or existing) that would advocate for child care needs in the community as well as serve as important local resources for children and their families. The chart on the opposite page shows the relationships of these Community-Based Committees.

A Coordinated Early Childhood Care and Education System

Community-Based Committees

Created and faciliated by the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies to address local needs expressed by families and children. Involves local early childhood care and education professionals. Committees work closely with the regional Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and are represented on the state's Early Childhood Care and Educational Council.

Voluntary members:
- Parents
- Head Start
- Elected officials
- County Social Services
- Public Schools
- Special Needs Education
- School-Age Child Care
- Family & Center Child Care Providers
- Employers
- Funders
- Health care professionals

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

Coordinates Early Childhood Care and Education services in region. Partially funded by state grants. Accountable to and serves on MN Early Childhood Care and Education Council.

MN Early Childhood Care and Education Council

A new semi-independent state agency. Recommends policy and funding for early childhood care and education programs to the state legislature. Helps coordinate work between state agencies. Administers Child Care Resource & Referral Agency Grants and Service Development Grants.

Members Appointed by Governor:
- Private Foundation
- Family Child Care
- Child Care Center
- Parent
- Corporation CEO
- Small Business
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children
- Representative of K-12 Education
- County Government

Appointed by Statute:

Departments of:
- Human Services
- Jobs & Training
- Health
- Education
- State Planning
- Higher Education Coordinating Board

- MN Head Start Assoc.
- Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
- Community-Based Committees
- Ex-officio legislative members

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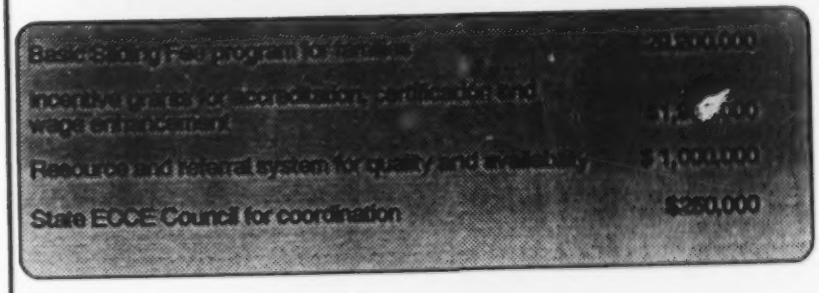
Recommendation 4: Funding

The task force identified two ways in which the legislature can make adequate appropriations for early childhood care and education.

A. The task force recommends that the legislature appropriate an additional $7 million for early childhood care and education services in the 1992-93 biennium.

While this amount of money will not solve the state's child care crisis, it will improve availability, affordability and quality of early childhood care and education services enough to make a difference.

B. Minnesota will receive about $32 million in new federal dollars during the 1992-93 biennium. The task force recommends spending these dollars in the following way:



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The task force has reviewed all recommendations included in this report and estimates that it will cost an additional $41 million in the next biennium to make real improvements for Minnesota's children.

New Funding Needed From Federal, State and Private Sources for Improvements in Early Childhood Care and Education

Basic Sliding Fee program for families	$34,200,000
Incentive grants for accreditation, certification and wage enhancement*	$4,300,000*
[illegible]	[illegible]
Scholarships for child care providers to improve quality	$475,000
[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

The chart on the following page details the task force recommendations, including categories designated in federal law.

Funding Proposals: Federal and State Appropriations

All figures are rounded and accurate as of February 8, 1991.

STATE PROGRAMS	Family Support Act 1990-91	Family Support Act 1992-93	Federal Child Care Development Block Grant 1992-93 — The appropriation is divided by law into the following categories:				Total Federal Funding	State's Current Funding 1990-'91	TOTAL FUNDING 1992-'93
		To expand help to families "at risk" of needing AFDC; to improve standards; to provide training.	Appropriated to improve the Quality of Early Childhood Programs. Can be spent for: Resource & Referral; meeting state & local standards; monitoring licensing compliance; training; improving salaries: $1 million	To improve quality or increase availability of early childhood and latchkey programs: $250,000	To increase the availability of early childhood education and School Age Child Care programs: $3.8 million	To help families pay for child care: $15 million			
Child Care Subsidies: AFDC families	$13 million (est.)	$20 million (est.)						$16.7 million +	$49.7 million
Non-AFDC, low-income families	$3.8 million	$16.4 million				$15 million		$31.7 million*	$55.9 million
MN Early Childhood Care & Education Council				$250,000					$375,000
Resource & Referral Agencies			$1 million					$1.3 million	$2.3 million
Accreditation, Certification, Wage Improvements					$1.9 million			$1 million	$4.1 million
School Age Child Care Programs					$1.9 million				$1.9 million
Training	$90,000	$700,000							$1.27
Licensing	$290,000	$700,000							$1.18
TOTALS	$17.2 million (estimated)	$31.8 million (estimated)	$1 million	$250,000	$3.8 million	$15 million		$49.7 million	$116.7 million

+ State funds are used for AFDC families in STRIDE and for all AFDC families (STRIDE or not) for one year after having AFDC because of increased income.

* This is the Basic Sliding Fee program.

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Conclusion

The Child Care Task Force focused on identifying an early childhood care and education system and funding sources that would make the most effective use of and build on Minnesota's existing resources.

The statewide coordinated system proposed in this report addresses the services that are needed, ensures that services are not duplicated and helps families in their efforts to raise healthy children.

The statewide coordinated system proposed in this report addresses the services that are needed, ensures that services are not duplicated and helps families in their efforts to raise healthy children. The recommendations provide a balance between what is good for children and what can be funded.

Adoption of the task force recommendations promotes the following outcomes:

1. Children will get a healthy start and have a better quality of life.
2. Low-income families will have subsidies available to them and a waiting list for services will be rare.
3. All families will have affordable, quality early childhood care and education services available to them.
4. Families will know what child care services are available in their communities.
5. Families will have a way to express their unmet early childhood care and education needs to the Community-Based Committees and the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.
6. Families will be supported in making appropriate service choices for their children and recognizing quality programs.
7. Licensed providers will know where to obtain training and licensing assistance through the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and will see where their programs fit within their communities.

8. Providers will be able to express their needs and have input into state policy through the ECCE council, the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and the Community-Based Committees.

9. Child care workers will receive improved wages and benefits.

10. Communities will be mobilized to help determine need, allocate resources and make and support decisions to fully fund early childhood care and education services.

11. Businesses will participate in the development of the early childhood care and education system and will express the related needs of employers, employees and communities.

12. Schools will be encouraged to be full participants in sharing resources and developing high-quality learning environments for young children with a variety of resources for working families.

13. State agency staff will participate in the development of a coordinated system through their service on the state's early childhood care and education council.

14. Policy makers and the public will have a clearer understanding of how early childhood care and education programs are inter-related and work together.

15. A progressive income tax will fund quality early childhood care and education and make it a reality for all Minnesota families.

The adoption, implementation and accomplishment of these recommendations will make the task force's vision of an integrated system of early childhood care and education that fosters the healthy development of all children a reality for all Minnesota children and their families.

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Appendix A:
Current Child Care Funding

All branches of government--federal, state, county and municipal--have provided some funding for child care for Minnesota families over the past several years. This section reviews these public funding sources and the amounts available.

Federal Funding

Federal funding for early childhood care and education includes funding through Title XX of the Social Security Act, to participants in STRIDE, through the federal child care tax credit and through the Child Care and Development Block Grant and the Family Support Act.

Title XX

Title XX of the Social Security Act was for many years the major source of federal money for child care. Title XX is a block grant available to states for a variety of social services, not exclusively child care. Minnesota expects to receive about $47.8 million in Title XX money for 1991. This will be distributed among 87 counties based on a formula set by the Legislature. Only a very small portion of Title XX funds are expected to be available for child care services.

AFDC Child Care Program

Federal money is also available to reimburse part of the cost of child care for AFDC participants in STRIDE, Minnesota's welfare-reform program. This child care is available to STRIDE participants for as long as they are in the training and employment program and to all recipients leaving AFDC to take a job, for up to one year. The federal government reimburses Minnesota for approximately 53 percent of the cost of child care. This money has been available only since state fiscal year (FY) 1988. Minnesota expects to receive up to $11 million in federal funds for STRIDE participants and those leaving AFDC in FY 1991.

Federal Child Care Tax Credit

The federal government indirectly subsidizes the cost of child care for Minnesota families through the Child and Dependent Care Credit. This tax credit can be claimed for a percentage of child care expenses up to $2,400 for one child and $4,800 for two or more, for a maximum reimbursement of $720 or $1,440 respectively. This credit is not capped by income limits nor is it refundable, but it does reduce a family's tax burden.

Child Care Legislation

In the fall of 1990, Congress appropriated new funds to states for child care: the Child Care and Development Block Grant and expansion of the Family Support Act. Together these grants will send over $16 million to Minnesota for federal fiscal year 1991.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant of $10.1 million requires that 75 percent of the funds be used to help families to pay for child care. The other 25 percent can be used by states to carry out activities designed to improve the quality of child care and to increase the availability of before- and after-school services and early childhood development services.

The Family Support Act will provide $5.9 million to Minnesota. $5.2 million is to be used for child care for working families who are at risk of going on AFDC and requires a state match. The remaining $700,000 is to improve standards, monitor compliance with state standards and provide training to providers. Half of this money will be used for training.

State Funding

State funding for early childhood care and education is available through the Child Care Fund, through AFDC and through the Minnesota's Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

Child Care Fund

Administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Child Care Fund includes subsidies for child care for AFDC caretakers and low income non-AFDC families and resource and referral services, along with service development grants. The program for non-AFDC families is called the Basic Sliding Fee program. Parents usually apply to their county social service office for these subsidies.

The Legislature has appropriated $23.1 million to the Child Care Fund for fiscal year 1991, allocated as follows:

Migrant Day Care	$ 200,000
Resource and Referral Grants	650,000
Service Development Grants	500,000
State Administration	150,000
Basic Sliding Fee Program	10,576,236
AFDC Child Care Program	10,982,764
Total:	**$23,059,000**

AFDC Child Care

Child care is available to AFDC caretakers who participate in the STRIDE program. Parents under the age of 20 who have not completed their high school education are required to participate in STRIDE. The following AFDC parents can voluntarily participate in STRIDE:

- (1) those who were in STRIDE before May 1, 1990;
- (2) those who have been receiving AFDC for four years or more;
- (3) those whose youngest child is 16 or older or who have little or no work experience;
- (4) those under age 22 who have not finished high school or obtained a graduate equivalency degree; and
- (5) those who are not in the self-employment demonstration or New Chance projects.

Child care is also available to AFDC caretakers who are employed and who lose their eligibility for AFDC due to their earnings, whether or not they have participated in STRIDE. In order to qualify for this extended "transition year" child care program, a family must have received AFDC for three of the six months before its loss of eligibility and must continue to have a dependent child. Families receiving these transition year subsidies must contribute to the cost of care on a sliding fee basis.

The Department of Human Services expects to serve about 10,000 families under this program in fiscal year 1991, at a cost of between $1,000 and $3,500 per family, depending on the number of children and the type of employment program.

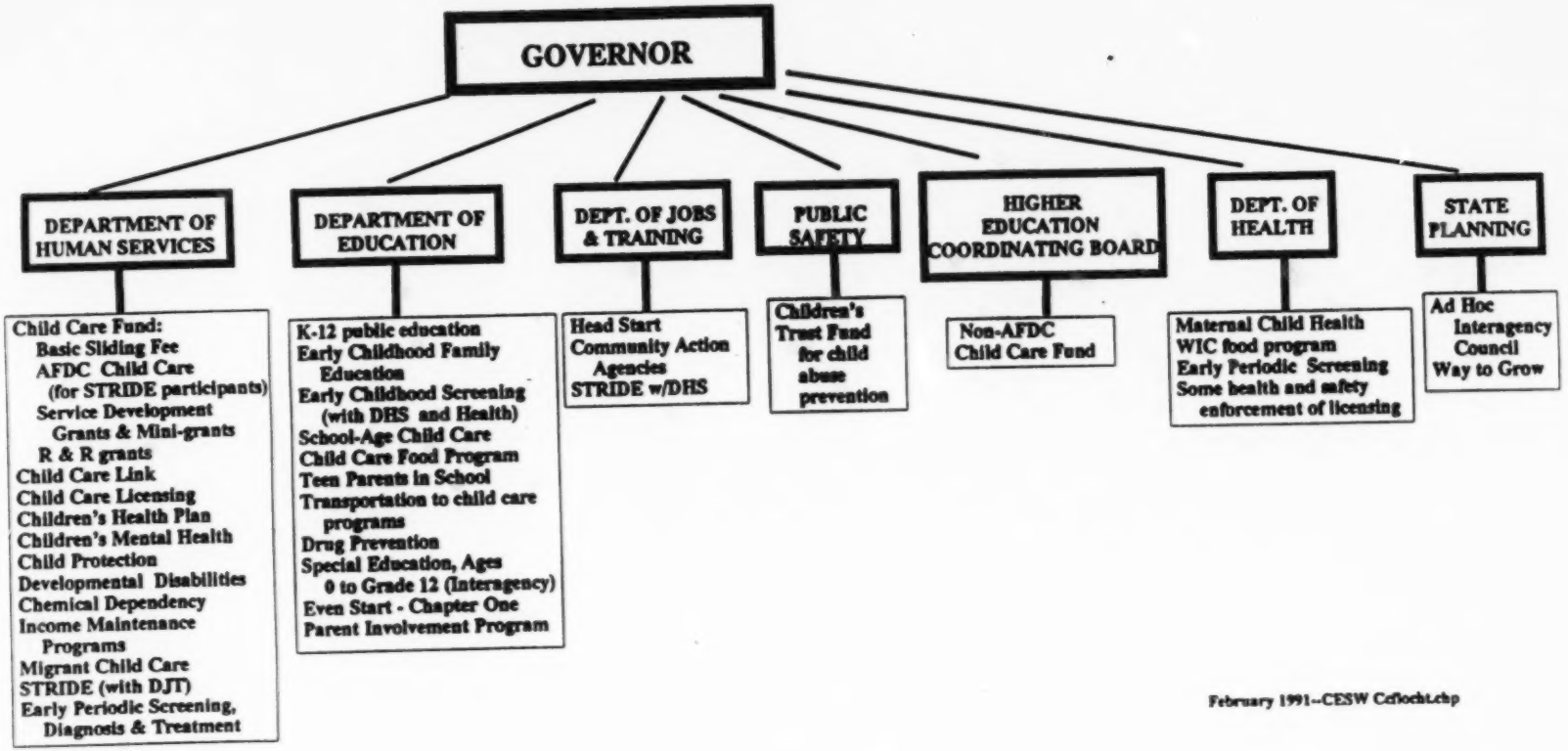
State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

The state also indirectly subsidizes child care for Minnesota families through the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. For tax year 1989, taxpayers with incomes up to $27,000 could claim a refundable credit of up to $720 for one dependent and $1,440 for two or more dependents; this credit can be applied for child care for children under the age of 13. Starting in tax year 1991, the income ceiling will be adjusted to account for inflation.

Based on the House Research Income Tax Simulation program, this credit is estimated to cost the state's general fund about $13 million per year in fiscal years 1990 and 1991. The cost to the state in foregone tax revenue is expected to be $26 million for the 1990-91 biennium. (Estimates of the cost of this credit for the 1988-89 biennium were not available.)

APPENDIX B

Early Childhood Care and Education Administered by State Agencies



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Appendix C: Definitions

Child Care

Child care is provided for children when their parents work or go to school and promotes the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of the children through developmentally appropriate practices.

These services include family child care, group family child care, or center child care offered through schools, churches, hospitals and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies. Services are funded through parent fees and are subsidized through the Child Care Fund and tax credits. These programs are licensed and monitored by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and county social service agencies.

Preschool (Nursery School)

Preschool enriches young children through educational and social experiences and promotes their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development through developmentally appropriate practices.

Preschool programs are sponsored by a variety of agencies, including schools, churches, colleges and universities and private nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and usually are funded through parent fees and private subsidies. These programs are licensed and monitored by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

School-age Child Care

School-age child care (also known as extended day or latch-key care) is provided for children ages 5 to 12 before and after school and during school vacations. This care promotes positive development through experiential and continued learning opportunities and quality interaction with adults.

School-age programs are sponsored by such agencies as school districts, community agencies, churches, and private nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Funding is usually through parent fees and subsidized through the Basic Sliding Fee program and tax credits. Only the public school programs are monitored by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Head Start

Head Start is a comprehensive child and family development program designed to help economically disadvantaged three-, four and five-year-old children and their families achieve their full potential. Head Start provides education, health, nutrition and social services. Head Start involves parents in all aspects of the program. Head Start parents serve on policy councils and committees and play an active role in program operation. They attend workshops and serve as volunteers in the program. Nationwide, 35.9 percent of Head Start staff are parents of current or former Head Start children.

Head Start has a legislative mandate to reserve "no less than ten percent of the total number of enrollment opportunities" for children with professionally diagnosed disabilities requiring special services. They receive the full range of Head Start services alongside their non-disabled peers. Head Start staff members work closely with community agencies to provide services to meet the special needs of these children and their families. To be eligible for enrollment in Head Start, a family's income may not exceed federal poverty guidelines. Exceptions are sometimes made for children with disabilities or children from families with exceptional needs.

Nationally, Head Start is administered by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Minnesota Head Start funds are administered by the Economic Opportunity Office of the Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training. Head Start centers are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

Early Childhood Family Education helps Minnesota parents become more effective by involving them and their young children from birth to kindergarten enrollment in experiences that enhance the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of the children.

These services include parent and family education through discussion groups, workshops and home visits; parent-child interaction opportunities; guided play and learning activities for children; early health and development screening and problem detection; book and toy lending libraries; community resources information; and special events for the entire family. ECFE is offered through community education programs in local school districts. Funds are allocated by the Legislature as state aid adjusted to the property tax base. These programs are monitored by the Minnesota Department of Education. Over 360 school districts provided ECFE to 178,000 parents and children during the 1989-90 school year.

STRIDE (Success Through Reaching Individual Development and Employment)

STRIDE is the Minnesota program which fulfills the federal requirement in the 1988 Welfare Reform Act to provide employment and training services to AFDC clients. STRIDE is administered jointly by the Department of Human Services and the Department of Jobs and Training. The goal of the STRIDE program is to help AFDC clients gain the skills necessary to become economically independent.

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Appendix E:
Child Care Task Force

The 1989 Minnesota Legislature provided funding to the Commission on the Economic Status of Women to undertake a study of coordinated child care in Minnesota. The Commission established the Child Care Task Force to develop recommendations to be made to the 1991 legislature on structuring a child care system and financing child care. Members included: child care providers; child care workers and advocates; business and education representatives; legislators; and representatives of state agencies currently involved in some aspect of child care services. Representative Karen Clark chaired the task force.

The task force met regularly from October 1989 through December 1990. It heard presentations from representatives of Head Start, family child care, school-age child care, resource and referral agencies, the Minnesota State Planning Agency's Interagency Coordinating Council, counties and the business community. The task force also discussed at length child care workers' wages and benefits, developmentally appropriate practices, the integration of child care and early childhood education, child care subsidies and the effects on the family and costs of the current child care system.

A panel discussion was held with representatives from the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Jobs and Training and Education, the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the State Planning Agency to familiarize the task force members with the responsibilities of each agency regarding child care programs. National child care experts Jule Sugarman from Special Olympics International and Sandra Skolnik from the Maryland Commission for Children presented current issues to the task force. The task force also reviewed numerous publications from Minnesota and other states.

Task force members drew up the following mission statement.

The mission of the Child Care Task Force is to develop and recommend a clear and coordinated system that:

- *Recognizes the need of children for developmentally appropriate early childhood care and education that promotes the child's physical, intellectual, social and emotional development.*
- *Assists families in providing and obtaining quality education and care that are accessible and affordable and can continue from birth through early adolescence, as needed.*
- *Maximizes and coordinates community resources for early childhood development at the state and local levels.*
- *Provides supportive policy and stable funding for quality early childhood care and education that respect the unique needs and diversity of individual families of all income levels and all social and economic backgrounds.*

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Connie Morrison
Katy Olson
Howard Orenstein
Gloria Segal

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